

2165

## President Barack Obama and President Demetris Christofias of the Republic of Cyprus

### PROPOSED HEADS OF STATE MEETING AT THE WHITE HOUSE

In early 2009, the Republic of Cyprus requested an official Heads of State meeting. This meeting request is well known throughout the State Department. President Christofias is prepared to travel to Washington for the meeting anytime between now and the end of September. This request should be granted for several reasons:

- **Support Cyprus's Constructive Role in the Middle East.** As the only EU member located in the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus is heavily invested in promoting long-term stability and security in the Middle East. Cyprus maintains longstanding relations with all involved in the wider Arab-Israeli conflict. After the Gaza flotilla incident in late May 2010, Cyprus engaged in discussions with world leaders concerning how to broker an agreement to ensure legitimate humanitarian aid shipments to Gaza. During the Lebanon crisis of July-August 2006, Cyprus served as a safe haven for approximately 15,000 Americans and tens of thousands of others evacuating Lebanon. Cyprus also served as the primary launching point for humanitarian aid to the people of Lebanon. Cyprus now serves as the staging ground and headquarters for the UN peacekeeping operations in Lebanon.
- **Stimulate and Support Reunification Talks.** On April 18, the occupied portion of Cyprus (the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" or "TRNC") "elected" Dervis Eroglu as its leader. Eroglu is a prominent member of the conservative National Unity Party which favors close ties to Turkey and supports independence from the Republic of Cyprus. This view conflicts significantly with the UN basis for a solution to the Cyprus problem which entails, in part, reunification of the island and the withdrawal of Turkish troops. A Heads of State meeting will stimulate the reunification talks and help ensure that they continue in a manner consistent with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.
- **Overdue for a Meeting.** The last official Heads of State meeting was over 15 years ago.
- **Timing.** On September 28, the Smithsonian Institute will open a major exhibit entitled *Cyprus: Crossroads of Civilizations*. The opening will coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cyprus' independence. President Christofias will be in Washington to attend the opening. However, as noted above, he is willing to travel to Washington any time before then to meet with President Obama.

2010 JUL -9 AM 10:08  
NOV/DEC/2009  
UNIT